

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 2003-NM-164-AD; Amendment 39-13292; AD 2003-18-01]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; General Dynamics (Convair) Model P4Y-2 Airplanes, General Dynamics (Consolidated-Vultee) (Army) Model LB-30 Airplanes, and General Dynamics (Consolidated) (Army) Model C-87A Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This amendment supersedes an existing airworthiness directive (AD), applicable to various surplus military airplanes manufactured by Consolidated, Consolidated Vultee, and Convair, that currently requires repetitive inspections to find fatigue cracks in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings; repair or replacement of any cracked part with a new part; and follow-on inspections at new intervals. This amendment continues to require those actions and revises and clarifies the applicability of the existing AD. The actions specified in this AD are intended to find and fix fatigue cracking, which could result in structural failure of the wings and consequent loss of control of the airplane. This action is intended to address the identified unsafe condition.

DATES: Effective September 18, 2003.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before November 3, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-114, Attention: Rules Docket No. 2003-NM-164-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056. Comments may be inspected at this location between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Comments may be submitted via fax to (425) 227-1232. Comments may also be sent via the Internet using the following address: 9-anm-iarcomment@faa.gov. Comments sent via fax or the Internet must contain "Docket No. 2003-NM-164-AD" in the subject line and need not be submitted in triplicate. Comments sent via the Internet as attached electronic files must be formatted in Microsoft Word 97 for Windows or ASCII text.

Information pertaining to this AD may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue, SW., Renton, Washington; or at the FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Cecil, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Branch, ANM-120L, FAA, Los Angeles Aircraft Certification Office, 3960 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California 90712-4137; telephone (562) 627-5228; fax (562) 627-5210.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On April 16, 2003, the FAA issued AD 2003-08-13, amendment 39-13126 (68 FR 19728, April 22, 2003), applicable to various surplus military airplanes manufactured by Consolidated, Consolidated Vultee, and Convair, to require repetitive inspections to find fatigue cracks in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings; repair or replacement of any cracked part with a new part; and follow-on inspections at new intervals. That action was prompted by an accident resulting from the structural failure of the center wing of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Model P4Y-2 airplane, and results of an investigation, which revealed fatigue cracking of the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings. Such fatigue cracking, if not found and fixed in a timely manner, could result in structural failure of the wings and consequent loss of control of the airplane.

Actions Since Issuance of Previous Rule

Since the issuance of that AD, the FAA has received inquiries concerning the applicability of the AD. The commenters indicate that the applicability of the AD, as published, contains a phrase that could lead the reader to believe that the AD applies to all former military surplus aircraft, rather than just those airplanes specifically called out by model in the AD.

We agree that using the phrase "including, but not limited to, all of the following surplus military airplanes" in the applicability of the existing AD may be misleading; therefore, we have clarified the applicability of this new AD by removing that phrase. We also have revised the applicability to retain only those airplane models for which a U.S. type certificate has been issued: General Dynamics (Consolidated-Vultee) (Army) Model LB-30 airplanes, and General Dynamics (Convair) Model P4Y-2 airplanes. Additionally, this AD adds a new airplane model, General Dynamics (Consolidated) (Army) Model C-87A airplanes, to the applicability of this AD. Other models specified in the existing AD have been removed from the applicability of this new AD.

Explanation of Requirements of Rule

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop on other airplanes of the same type design, this AD supersedes AD 2003-08-13 to continue to require repetitive inspections to find fatigue cracks in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings; repair or replacement of any cracked part with a new part; and follow-on inspections at new intervals. As specified above, this AD clarifies and revises the applicability of the existing AD to add another airplane model and remove certain other airplane models.

Determination of Rule's Effective Date

Since a situation exists that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for prior public comment hereon are impracticable, and that good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Changes to 14 CFR part 39/Effect on the AD

On July 10, 2002, the FAA issued a new version of 14 CFR part 39 (67 FR 47997, July 22, 2002), which governs the FAA's airworthiness directives system. The regulation now includes material that relates to altered products, special flight permits, and alternative methods of compliance. Because we have now included this material in part 39, only the office authorized to approve AMOCs is identified in each individual AD.

Determination of Rule's Effective Date

Since a situation exists that requires the immediate adoption of this regulation, it is found that notice and opportunity for prior public comment hereon are impracticable, and that good cause exists for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

Although this action is in the form of a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and, thus, was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment, comments are invited on this rule. Interested persons are invited to comment on this rule by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications shall identify the Rules Docket number and be submitted in triplicate to the address specified under the caption ADDRESSES. All communications received on or before the closing date for comments will be considered, and this rule may be amended in light of the comments received. Factual information that supports the commenter's ideas and suggestions is extremely helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the AD action and determining whether additional rulemaking action would be needed.

Submit comments using the following format:

- Organize comments issue-by-issue. For example, discuss a request to change the compliance time and a request to change the service bulletin reference as two separate issues.
- For each issue, state what specific change to the AD is being requested.
- Include justification (e.g., reasons or data) for each request.

Comments are specifically invited on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of the rule that might suggest a need to modify the rule. All comments submitted will be available, both before and after the closing date for comments, in the Rules Docket for examination by interested persons. A report that summarizes each FAA-public contact concerned with the substance of this AD will be filed in the Rules Docket.

Commenters wishing the FAA to acknowledge receipt of their comments submitted in response to this rule must submit a self-addressed, stamped postcard on which the following statement is made: "Comments to Docket Number 2003-NM-164-AD." The postcard will be date stamped and returned to the commenter.

Regulatory Impact

The regulations adopted herein will not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, it is determined that this final rule does not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132.

The FAA has determined that this regulation is an emergency regulation that must be issued immediately to correct an unsafe condition in aircraft, and that it is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866. It has been determined further that this action involves an emergency regulation under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979). If it is determined that this emergency regulation otherwise would be significant under DOT

Regulatory Policies and Procedures, a final regulatory evaluation will be prepared and placed in the Rules Docket. A copy of it, if filed, may be obtained from the Rules Docket at the location provided under the caption ADDRESSES.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the Federal Aviation Administration amends part 39 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR part 39) as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. Section 39.13 is amended by removing amendment 39-13126 (68 FR 19728, April 22, 2003), and by adding a new airworthiness directive (AD), amendment 39-13292, to read as follows:

AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVE



Aircraft Certification Service
Washington, DC

U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

We post ADs on the internet at "www.faa.gov"

The following Airworthiness Directive issued by the Federal Aviation Administration in accordance with the provisions of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 39, applies to an aircraft model of which our records indicate you may be the registered owner. Airworthiness Directives affect aviation safety and are regulations which require immediate attention. You are cautioned that no person may operate an aircraft to which an Airworthiness Directive applies, except in accordance with the requirements of the Airworthiness Directive (reference 14 CFR part 39, subpart 39.3).

2003-18-01 General Dynamics (Convair), General Dynamics (Consolidated-Vultee) (Army), and General Dynamics (Consolidated) (Army): Amendment 39-13292. Docket 2003-NM-164-AD. Supersedes AD 2003-08-13, Amendment 39-13126.

Applicability: All Model P4Y-2 airplanes, Model LB-30 airplanes, and Model C-87A airplanes; certificated in any category.

Compliance: Required as indicated, unless accomplished previously.

To find and fix fatigue cracking in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings, which could result in structural failure of the wings and consequent loss of control of the airplane, accomplish the following:

Initial and Repetitive Inspections for Certain Airplanes

(a) For Models P4Y-2 and LB-30 airplanes: Within 30 days after May 7, 2003 (the effective date of AD 2003-08-13, amendment 39-13126), do the actions specified in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this AD per a method approved by the Manager, Los Angeles Certification Office (ACO), FAA.

(1) Do an inspection (between 39 and 63 inches outboard of the airplane center line on both the left and right sides of the wings) to find cracks in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings localized under the front spar lower cap. Special detailed inspection procedures must be sufficiently reliable to determine the location, size, and orientation of the cracks.

(2) Develop repetitive inspection intervals that prevent crack growth from exceeding the minimum residual strength required to support limit load on the affected structure. The repetitive inspection intervals must be approved by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO. Thereafter, do the inspection approved per paragraph (a)(1) of this AD at the intervals approved per this paragraph.

Initial and Repetitive Inspections for Model C-87A Airplanes

(b) For all Model C-87A airplanes: Within 30 days after the effective date of this AD, do the actions specified in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this AD per a method approved by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO.

(1) Do an inspection (between 39 and 63 inches outboard of the airplane center line on both the left and right sides of the wings) to find cracks in the lower rear cap of the wing front spar, front spar web, and lower skin of the wings localized under the front spar lower cap. Special detailed inspection procedures must be sufficiently reliable to determine the location, size, and orientation of the cracks.

(2) Develop repetitive inspection intervals that prevent crack growth from exceeding the minimum residual strength required to support limit load on the affected structure. The repetitive inspection intervals must be approved by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO. Thereafter, do the inspection approved per paragraph (b)(1) of this AD at the intervals approved per this paragraph.

If Any Cracking Is Found

(c) If any crack is found during any inspection required by this AD, before further flight, do the action(s) specified in paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this AD per a method approved by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO.

(1) Repair or replace the cracked part or structure.

(2) Repeat the inspection required by paragraph (a)(1) of this AD at reduced intervals approved by the Manager, Los Angeles ACO, to find cracks before the growth is critical and exceeds the minimum residual strength required to support limit load on the affected structure.

Alternative Methods of Compliance

(d) In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, the Manager, Los Angeles ACO, FAA, is authorized to approve alternative methods of compliance for this AD.

Effective Date

(e) This amendment becomes effective on September 18, 2003.

Issued in Renton, Washington, on August 19, 2003.

Ali Bahrami,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 03-22382 Filed 9-2-03; 8:45 am]

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